## REMARKS

By this amendment, claims 1-4 have been amended. Thus, claims 1-4 are now active in the application. Reexamination and reconsideration of the application is respectfully requested.

The specification and abstract have been carefully reviewed and revised to correct grammatical and idiomatic errors in order to aid the Examiner in further consideration of the application. The amendments to the specification and abstract are incorporated in the attached substitute specification and abstract. No new matter has been added.

Attached hereto is a marked-up version of the changes made to the specification and claims by the current amendment. The attachment is captioned "**Version with markings to show changes made**."

In items 1 and 2 on page 2 of the Office Action, claims 1-4 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite because: (1) the claims were method claims but did not positively recite active method steps; (2) the claims failed to recite plural bamboo and wood fibers; and (3) the claims recited an infinite number of transpiring paths. Accordingly, in order to obviate this rejection, the claims have been thoroughly reviewed and amended to specifically address these criticisms. In particular, all of the claim limitations have now been placed in positive, active method step format. In addition, the claims now recite plural bamboo and/or wood fibers, and no longer recite an "infinite" number of transpiring paths. The claims have been otherwise revised to improve their English grammar and U.S. form, but the substance of the claims has not been otherwise modified, and the claims have not been narrowed in scope. Thus, it is submitted that the claims are now clearly definite within the meaning of 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph.

Next, in items 3 and 4 on pages 2 and 3 of the Office Action, claims 1-4 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent 6,619,233 (Mochizuki). This rejection is respectfully traversed on the basis that the Mochizuki patent does not constitute a proper reference against the present application claims.

More specifically, since the Mochizuki patent issued on September 16, 2003, and the present application was filed October 20, 2003, the Mochizuki patent does not constitute a reference under 35 U.S.C. 102(b). Accordingly, the prior art rejection is based by necessity on either 35 U.S.C. 103(a)/102(e) or 35 U.S.C. 103(a)/102(a). However, a reference under 35 U.S.C. 102(a) or 35 U.S.C. 102(e) must be a reference "by another," in order to constitute a proper reference against an application claim. In the present case, the Mochizuki patent has the same inventorship as the claims of the present application.

Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that the Mochizuki patent (U.S. 6,619,233) does not constitute a proper reference against the present claims. Accordingly, it is respectfully requested that the prior art rejection be withdrawn.

Furthermore, in accordance with 35 U.S.C. 103(c), it is noted that, at the time the invention was made, the subject matter of the Mochizuki patent (U.S. 6,619,233) and the claimed invention were "owned by the same person or subject to an obligation of assignment to the same person."

For the above reasons, it is submitted that the application is now clearly in condition for allowance, and an early notice thereof is earnestly solicited.

If, after reviewing this Amendment, the Examiner feels there are any issues remaining which must be resolved before the application can be passed to issue, it is respectfully requested that the Examiner contact the undersigned by telephone in order to resolve such issues.

Respectfully submitted,

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